

In a world of dungeons and dragons. . . by theamiableanachronism

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Summary:

In which a certain party escapes from a labyrinth with the help of a mysterious mage.

In a world of dungeons and dragons. . .

“You shouldn’t have called him stupid, Dustin!”

“He was asking for it!”

“They’re ALWAYS asking for it!”

“GUYS!” Mike yelled over his shoulder, curbing the impulse to roll his eyes. “Run now, fight later!” He turned his attention back to the never-ending corridor before them, trying to ignore the thundering footsteps of Brenner’s angry cronies close behind them.

“How big is this place, anyway?” Dustin wheezed. “I’m dying here!”

“Who cares? We aren’t going to stick around long enough to find out! Here!” Mike shouted, pointing down the next corridor. They raced through it and ran smack into a dead end, all four boys slamming into the stone wall with a resounding thud.

“Dammit,” Lucas hissed under his breath as he disentangled his bow from the folds of his cloak. “What are we going to do now?”

“They’re coming!” Will jumped to his feet and drew his sword just as twenty of Brenner’s soldiers ran around the corner and into the corridor.

“You know what I said about fighting earlier?” Mike said, drawing his own sword. “I think now might be a good time.”

“Way ahead of you,” Dustin grinned.

And then they were upon them. The clash of swords filled the corridor as the boys and the soldiers were locked in battle. Will, smallest of the group, had the best advantage, darting in and out between soldiers and catching them off guard, knocking them off their feet. Lucas went through arrow after arrow, letting them fly into the crowd, each hitting their mark in the arm of a soldier. Mike and Dustin fought off the largest part of the group, doing their best to drive them back with jabs to the arms and sides.

But try as they might, twenty against four were terrible odds, and the boys were driven further and further down the corridor until they were pressed back up against the wall. Mike could see his reflection in the sword of the soldier sneering in front of him and he squeezed his eyes shut, bracing for the impact.

“WAIT!”

His eyes snapped open. The soldiers had stopped and were lowering their swords, turning to watch someone cut through their ranks. Mike looked to Lucas, whose face was mirroring the relief and confusion he

felt. He shrugged and shook his head. What had made them stop? Mike craned his neck to look down the corridor, his stomach curdling as he realized why that voice had sounded so familiar.

"Brenner," Dustin growled through gritted teeth.

A tall, white-haired man cut through the ranks, an all-too-familiar smirk on his face as he came to a halt in front of the boys. Lucas let an arrow fly, but at the last moment, Brenner leaned out of the way and it struck a soldier in the arm instead.

"Dammit," Lucas hissed as the soldier groaned in pain. Brenner rolled his eyes.

"Forty against four. Was that worth the wasted arrow?"

"I don't know. Why don't we try again? Don't move this time."

Brenner chuckled, his black eyes narrowed.

"Charming, as always. Now, to what do I owe the pleasure? Come to steal away my most priceless possession?"

"What is it this time? Some stupid necklace or something?" Mike rolled his eyes. "Whatever it is, we don't want it."

"Yeah! We're on a completely different mission," Dustin said before Lucas elbowed him hard in the side. "Ow!" he hissed.

Brenner's lips twitched. "From Mr. Clarke? Ah yes, how IS your fearless leader? Obviously not training you as well as he used to. Running straight into the heart of my labyrinth?" Brenner shook his head, clicking his tongue. "Sloppy."

Will glared. "You're the one who chased us in here!"

Brenner waved a gloved hand. "Details are irrelevant. But now I can't let you leave. You're all witnesses."

"To what? You being an idiot?" Lucas snapped.

Brenner smiled and regarded them for a moment, searching their faces in a way that made them all squirm. After a moment, he seemed satisfied and nodded, his lip curling. "Alright. I'll let you go. After," he said, holding up a gloved hand. "You've seen it."

"Seen what?" Lucas spat. Mike elbowed him in the side, meeting his eyes with a warning glance.

The smile on Brenner's face widened, making his eyes crinkle at the corners. "My creature, of course. Bring them," he ordered with a flick of his wrist. Eight soldiers rushed forward and seized the boys, lifting them above the ground by their arms.

"Hey, we can walk!" Dustin snapped, kicking his legs furiously. Brenner chuckled and another flick of his wrist set them back on the ground.

"Now come along," Brenner called, turning and gliding down the corridor, his cloak brushing across the stones.

"Guys," Will whispered, barely moving his lips. "We really need to get out of here. This is our chance."

"You want to run through all these guys?" Lucas muttered back, eyeing the soldiers surrounding them with the same frustration that filled Will's voice.

"It's probably just another stupid necklace or something," Dustin murmured. "Remember last time? We can make a break while he's drooling over it." A jab in the back from one of the soldiers sent Dustin and the rest of the boys back into a scowling silence.

"Do... do you think Mr. Clarke'll come looking for us?" Will whispered, breaking the silence.

Lucas scoffed. "Doubt it. He said this mission could take a couple days. He'll probably start worrying day after tomorrow."

"I told you this place didn't look like a cave," Dustin muttered.

"Hey, don't start," Mike warned, eyes fixed on the back of Brenner's head. "We're in enough trouble already! Let's just get this over with." Brenner led them through corridor after winding corridor, making sharp turns that were unpredictable but obviously calculated. Every time he stopped, he watched the crossing, as if waiting for some kind of sign. Then he would take off again, just as quickly as before, making the rest of the group run to catch up, Dustin taking special care to delay so he could "accidentally" tread on his soldiers' feet. The farther they went, the colder it became, and the farther they went, the worse Mike felt. He could have said something to keep them from even coming near this place. Lucas was right: they were completely on their own here and completely at Brenner's mercy, if that was even the right word.

Eventually, Brenner came to a halt in front of a black door. With a flourish, he swept aside his cloak and produced a huge ring of black iron keys. He placed one of the keys in the lock and the heavy tumblers clicked ominously. He turned back to the boys, placing the keys back in his pocket with a smug grin.

"We're here." He pushed the door open and beckoned them inside. Mike dug his heels into the ground, and noticed his friends doing the same as the soldiers pushed against them.

"I don't feel good about this," Dustin mumbled to Lucas.

"When do you feel good about anything?" he snapped back. The soldiers heaved and sent the boys stumbling through the doorway.

Just as they got their balance back, Brenner swirled through the door and slammed it shut, locking it with the iron key. Mike swallowed, his mouth suddenly dry. As his eyes adjusted to the darkness lit by only a few torches, they confirmed his fears that that door was their only way out. And now it was locked. He considered tackling Brenner and wrestling the keys out of his pocket, but one look at his friends' faces confirmed that they were all thinking the same thing and coming to the same conclusion, since all of them were watching the soldiers that lined the room.

"Dammit," he hissed.

"Not to worry, my young squires, I intend to keep my promise," Brenner called from his spot on the other side of the room. "But now. What you came for." He clapped his hands and suddenly the ceiling began to open, with the clanking and churning sound of hundreds of gears. As the sunlight poured into the room, Brenner came closer and closer to the edge of a gaping pit.

"What the- " Dustin breathed, his mouth hanging open.

"So that's it? You brought us here to show us a hole?" Lucas sneered. Brenner chuckled. "As usual, you fail to see the deeper meaning. Come closer."

"Come to the edge of a huge hole? You've got to be kidding," Dustin snorted.

Brenner snapped his fingers and the boys were seized by more soldiers.

"Didn't we do this already?" Mike said, struggling to free himself.

Brenner smiled as a low growl emitted from the pit. It grew into a roar that shook the entire room. Brenner chuckled as he took in the boys' horrified faces.

"Excellent. It's awake."

"WHAT'S AWAKE?" Mike yelled.

"What are you trying to pull?" Lucas shouted angrily, renewing his struggles.

"I said I would let you go. You just didn't specify where." With a wave of his hand, the soldiers held the boys over the mouth of the pit.

"YOU BASTARD," Mike shouted, glaring into Brenner's smug face.

Suddenly, the wall to Brenner's right exploded. The room seemed to spin as the soldier holding Mike lost his balance and tipped over backwards. Mike rolled away, kicking the soldier in the stomach and unwittingly pushing him into the pit. His eyes went wide with terror

and his mouth opened in a silent scream as he slipped over the edge. Mike's stomach churned and he got to his feet, coughing in the dusty air.

Lucas came up behind him, free from his own captor, and coughed, "Let's get out of here!"

"We've got to find Dustin and Will first!"

Dustin coughed at Mike's side. "I'm here! Where's Will?"

A strangled yell from Brenner turned their attention to the hole where the wall used to be. A girl with a long brown braid was hopping over piles of rubble and stone, making her way towards them. She grabbed their hands and squeezed her eyes shut and before they could say a word, they were gone.